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English 101-09

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### A Relief

He wasn't sure if he was supposed to feel relieved. Her illness had not been too long. She had only suffered when the pain medication faded. Yet that is the exact feeling he had: Just relief.

The ladies from her church had brought a lot of casseroles. What is he going to do with that many casseroles? No one was hungry. How could they be hungry? His son, who had only stayed of two days, was flying home, so he could not take any casseroles. His daughters, who live near by, said the ladies brought them casseroles too.

He cannot remember when she wasn't here. Forty-seven years is a long time. He had planned to go first. She was younger. She took better care of herself. Why did she go first?

He remembers when he first met her. She had been riding the number nine bus. He sat next to her. The sun was shining; at least he remembers it that way. Her hair was golden, and her eyes had melted his heart. They had gone for coffee. They kissed.

When he met her parents, they had liked him. Her brothers had liked him too. Her dad had said it was about time she met someone nice.

When she became pregnant four years after the wedding, it was a relief. She had thought maybe they would not have children. She did not want to be like Mrs. Baxter who

lived up the street. She was so desperate for children. He had seen Mrs. Baxter go into the liquor store.

When the kids were young, he had always worried about them and asked questions. How are you doing in school? Who was that friend you brought home yesterday? Where are you going? They had turned out ok. What a relief.

She had said she would live with her sisters, if he went first. Her sisters live here in town. They were going to live together and travel the world. Now they touch his shoulder and ask, "what can we do?" He tells them to take a casserole.

When she had planned a vacation to Italy, it had scared him. He had never been outside of the country. They saw churches on every corner, statues, and domes. They ate things that they had never eaten before. She had smiled so big in all the pictures that it made him laugh. When the plane landed home again, he breathed a sigh of relief.

At first, he had not noticed. She said she was tired. He thought she had walked too many miles that day. She said she needed to lie down. He thought she had canned too many peaches that day. She said she wanted to go to bed. He thought she had gotten up too early. He had not noticed.

He is sorry he didn't notice. She had never been ill, so it did not occur to him. The doctor had told them she just needed rest. Then the doctor said she needed more tests. Then she needed another opinion. It was not a relief.

Things happened too fast. The treatments, the pills, the doctor visits, all seemed to happen in a dream. The kids came home. Everyone cried. She did not like when they cried.

He had felt helpless; she had said he was a comfort. In the end there was only pain. He could not tell her his heart was hurting when she looked at him. He could do no more for her. He had loved her. He had loved only her.

He was relieved.